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ABSTRACT

This monograph contains a collection of six national commission reports that address the nation's need to improve undergraduate education. The reports present findings and recommendations that target policy (public and institutional), programs (college and university), and constructive changes in institutions of higher education, as well as their expected outcomes. Although the discussions focus primarily on higher education, consideration is also given to the various reports concerned with American high schools. Each of the reports addresses a decline in general liberal education and calls for national efforts to strengthen undergraduate programs in two-year colleges, senior colleges, and universities. The specific thrusts of the reports are basically as follows: (1) the reordering of national priorities to make a full and unequivocal commitment to learning; (2) a redefinition of the meaning and purpose of baccalaureate degrees; (3) the improvement of undergraduate education in virtually all aspects; (4) the development of comprehensive state strategies for educational improvement; (5) the restoration of the humanities to their central position in college curricula; and (6) the inducement of more active involvement in learning on the part of students. Appendices include an annotated bibliography on American high school reform, and a list of the sponsors of major commission reports. Contains a 64-item bibliography and an index. (GLR)

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Assessment, Improvement, and Cooperation: The Challenge of Reform in Higher Education

by

Cameron Fincher

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FOREWORD

This monograph on another "era of commission reports" is an effort to encourage further deliberation of our national need to improve undergraduate education. The monograph focuses *directly* on the findings and recommendations of six national commission reports—and *indirectly* on various other commission reports and policy studies issued in the 1980s. In numerous ways commission reports and policy studies reflect public demands and expectations that must be implemented by institutions of higher education. The targets of their numerous recommendations are *policy* (public and institutional) and *programs* (college and university), and constructive changes in institutional policies, programs, and practices are their expected outcomes.

In making public policy recommendations most national commissions wisely address elected officials, state legislators, and other public opinion leaders. In their recommendations for institutional policies and programs, however, national commissions often fail to reach the policy and decision makers who "make a difference" on college and university campuses. More often than not, public commissions display a lack of sensitivity to the means by which policy is decided and implemented in higher education. The reasons are many—not the least of which is the frequency with which commission reports are issued and the urgency with which institutions are expected to respond.

The recommendations of public commissions result from a deliberative process that is poorly understood. Although most commissions will gather factual data and relevant information, their recommendations often result from proposals, counterproposals, and informal discussions that are not included in their reports. On many occasions the value premises of influential members will supersede the research findings of the commission's supporting staff. The intensity of one member's argument can be more convincing to other members than any research that might be cited.

Also at fault is the process by which commission reports are distributed. The process, at its worst, includes: a

press conference at which findings and recommendations are released, a cluster of newspaper editorials based on press releases, and keynote addresses at one or two national meetings by the commission chairman or the head of its sponsoring agency. In the meantime, campus leaders and faculty members must wait several weeks or more to obtain copies of the commission report. By the time faculty members can read the report (in its entirety), many of them have lost interest.

When faculty members do read commission reports, they tend to be unduly critical of the research on which such reports are ostensibly based. University faculties, in particular, have the highest possible regard for research and scholarship; their freedom to inquire, to know, and to publish is their most cherished belief. And yet, faculty members seldom conduct research on the effectiveness of their own institutions and they often debate academic policies and decisions in a manner that is embarrassingly similar to the deliberations of public commissions.

When commission reports are considered on college and university campuses, the process will too often include: capture by a few catchwords or slogans, the appointment of a committee, and perhaps a written report that will require implementation by "the administration." In the meantime, other commissions have been appointed, write other reports, and issue more recommendations for colleges and universities to implement.

Thus, many commission reports are not read and deliberated *within* the academic departments and *by* the faculty members who must translate policy recommendations into institutional programs and services. The relevance and the urgency of many commission reports thereby are lost, and the challenge of reform goes unheeded by many upon whom successful implementation is most dependent.

Nonetheless, this particular monograph is based on the "value premise" that reform is not only possible but increasingly probable. Since the fall of 1989 many unpredicted and unanticipated events have altered public perceptions and expectations. A new relevance can be attached to

policy recommendations for: (a) assessing educational outcomes, (b) improving undergraduate education, and (c) ensuring effective cooperation between higher education and secondary education, state government, and corporate business. These recommendations were the major thrust of most commission reports released during the 1980s, and the effective implementation of such recommendations is clearly in the best interests of American colleges and universities.

Efforts to assess educational outcomes, improve undergraduate education, and ensure effective cooperation are well underway. All such efforts, however, must be sustained, reviewed, and modified within a global context that is rapidly changing. The decade of the 1990s, although beginning with a wave of optimism, has already witnessed an unpredicted war in the Middle East, an unexpected recession that gives no signs of quick recovery, and an embarrassing "down-sizing of institutional aspirations" for the remaining years of the 20th century. A more optimistic outlook will surely prevail in 1992 with the economic unification of the European Community, the 500th anniversary of the discovery of the New World, and the many challenging opportunities of sociocultural change, technological innovation, and international cooperation within a more promising global economy. Each of these will bear directly on current efforts to internationalize college curricula, and to become more educationally competitive in what has been called "a new world order."

In brief, the nation's colleges and universities were increasingly perceived (during the 1980s) as a valuable national resource in economic growth and international competition. In the 1990s the education, training, and development of human knowledge and competence is essential in all phases of technological and cultural advancement, environmental enhancement, and multi-national solutions to global problems. And the challenge of reform in higher education has never been more relevant.

Cameron Fincher
May 10, 1991

THE CHALLENGE OF REFORM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The decade of the 1980s produced many challenges for secondary and higher education. Within the span of a single year (1983) at least eight major reports on secondary education were issued by national commissions. Each of these reports addressed the plight of American education and advocated extensive reform in the nation's high schools. Almost immediately a spate of similar reports addressed the issues and problems of higher education and recommended diverse ways in which undergraduate education should be improved. The release of national commission reports continued for seven or more years, and regional or state reports followed their lead. All such reports underscore a national, regional, and state-level need to reform secondary, postsecondary, and higher education.

This monograph discusses the major recommendations of the most relevant commission reports and considers their implications for the improvement of undergraduate education in American colleges and universities. Although the discussion focuses primarily on higher education, consideration also is given to the various reports concerned with American high schools. The issues and concerns expressed in most commission reports are problems that are common to the last three years of high school and the first two years of college. Indeed a noticeable weakness of several reports is the narrowly focused solutions they offer. The problems of postsecondary and higher education cannot be solved without the cooperation of the high schools that supply the great majority of advanced students. The difficulties of secondary education will not be resolved until high schools *and* colleges make a concerted, sustained attack on the basic skills and academic competencies of students graduating from high school.

The diverse commission reports issued during the 1980s have much in common—and much to commend. All

provide insight into the difficulties of undergraduate education and the many good intentions that have gone astray over the past twenty-five years. All are on target in pointing to a national need to strengthen baccalaureate degree programs and to declare in more affirmative, constructive terms the objectives and expected outcomes of a college education. And to a noticeable degree, all are correct in their inferences (or assumptions) that if undergraduate education is to be strengthened and if it is to give better evidence of quality or excellence, the challenge must be accepted by college and university faculties and concerted effort must be directed to the academic programs by which college students earn college degrees.

Among the many worthy recommendations of the various reports is the implication that if undergraduate instruction and academic programs are to be improved, attention must be given to classroom teaching *and* program development in institutional decisions related to appointing, promoting, and tenuring faculty members. The reward system of many institutions does indeed act as a disincentive for instructional improvement and for the enhancement of academic courses and programs. In much the same manner, if colleges are to assure the more active involvement of students in their own education, teaching faculty must develop more creditable and fair methods of assessing student competencies and in providing knowledge-of-results.

Three dominant themes are explicit in virtually all reports issued during the 1980s. These themes are identified best as:

1. The assessment of basic skills of literacy, academic competencies, and other educational outcomes in secondary *and* higher education: whatever the purposes of assessment, better evidence of student learning and development is essential to the reform of education.

2. The improvement of classroom instruction and student learning in coursework leading to advanced, specialized, and/or technical education: the grievous faults of education are in its fundamentals (reading, writing, and reasoning) and its general components (English, mathematics, history, and science).

3. The cooperation of business, government, and higher education in meeting the nation's most challenging educational problem: the training, instruction, and development of human resources in a culturally pluralistic society that is technologically driven!

National Perspectives

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), Association of American Colleges (AAC), Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (CFAT), Education Commission of the States (ECS), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and National Institute of Education (NIE) have issued reports on the status of undergraduate education in American institutions of higher learning. These six reports have been complemented by numerous other reports that address major issues in public and/or institutional policy, regional and state-level perspectives, and personal points-of-view concerning the quality of education. Thus, the current "literature of reform" is now voluminous and urgently needs sifting, sorting, assimilation, and constructive application.

Each of the major reports addresses a frightening decline in general, liberal education and calls for national efforts to strengthen undergraduate programs in two-year colleges, senior colleges, and universities. Each report gives different recommendations for the improvement of undergraduate education but all six reports have much in common.

The specific thrusts of the reports can be identified briefly as:

1. the reordering of national priorities to make a full and unequivocal commitment to learning (AASCU);
2. a redefinition of the meaning and purpose of baccalaureate degrees (AAC);
3. the improvement of undergraduate education in virtually all aspects (CFAT);
4. the development of comprehensive state strategies for educational improvement (ECS);
5. the restoration of the humanities to their central position in college curricula (NEH); and
6. the inducement of more active involvement in learning on the part of students (NIE).

In many respects, the NEH and AAC reports are the most traditional, one having been written by a philosopher (William J. Bennett) and the other (influenced substantially) by a historian (Frederick Rudolph). The CFAT report is the most ambitious and literally "covers the college campus" in its efforts to reform undergraduate education. The ECS report addresses public policy more directly than the others and is the one most likely to be read by state-level officials. The NIE report is also directed to public authority but reflects certain sociological preferences for undergraduate education, as opposed to humanistic concerns. The AASCU report is the most relevant and identifies fairly specific targets or goals for colleges and universities within the nation. Each report is comprehensive in the sense that it addresses all institutions engaged in undergraduate education, and in the further sense that most recommendations pertain to all academic programs leading to a bachelor's degree. All the reports seek public audiences, and none suffers from a lack of ambition to redirect and to enhance the undergraduate curricula of the nation's colleges and universities.

Following the release of the NEH report, other critics of higher education joined forces in decrying the state of college curricula and undergraduate achievement. Under a new director (Cheney, 1987) NEH sponsored a "national assessment" of what seventeen-year-olds know about their nation's history and its literary traditions. As depicted by Ravitch and Finn (1987), our high school juniors know very little about the history and literature of the nation in which they live. As students, they are ignorant of many essential facts and unexposed to most of the literary traditions that presumably give significance to national accomplishments.

Bennett (1987) and Cheney (1989) continued to discuss the national need for educational reform in proposals for a uniform high school curriculum and a core curriculum for college students. By then Secretary of Education, Bennett defined a four-year program that he would like to see implemented in the nation's high schools. In a model school, appropriately named James Madison High, Bennett would require four years of English that includes American, British, and world literature. Three years of social studies would include western civilization, American history, and two semesters dealing with American democracy. Three years of mathematics would permit choices within the fields of algebra, geometry, trigonometry, statistics, and calculus. In similar manner, three years of science would permit various combinations of astronomy, geology, biology, chemistry, physics, or technology. Two years of a single foreign language, two years of physical education, and one year of fine arts (art and music history) would complete the required courses. The ten remaining units required for graduation would be electives.

As chairman of the National Council on the Humanities, Cheney would require in a core curriculum for all college students: eighteen semester hours in western, American, and other civilizations; twelve hours of a foreign language (preferably one studied in high school); six hours in mathematics; eight hours in the natural sciences; and six hours in the social sciences (and modern world). Altogether

the core courses would consist of 50 hours, leaving the remainder of degree requirements for electives and major fields.

In similar concern for the declining quality of public education, the Bradley Commission on History in the Schools (1988) issued commendable guidelines for teaching history to the nation's culturally diverse high school students. Unlike the people of other nations, Americans have a "binding heritage in a democratic vision of liberty, equality, and justice." History is appropriately regarded as the school courses in which knowledge and understanding of our democrative heritage best can be imparted. A later volume published by the Bradley Commission (Gagnon, 1989) broadens the reform of history curricula in terms of our national need for "historical literacy." In that volume, the plight of history in course content is discussed by Diane Ravitch and the question, "Why study history" is cogently answered by three well known and highly regarded historians: Michael Kammen, William H. McNeill, and Gordon A. Craig. Other essays in the volume give good advice to curriculum specialists and school teachers in redirecting the role of history in public schools and in overcoming the various obstacles to better teaching and learning in the nation's classrooms.

Our continuing national concern with the basic skills of literacy is revisited in the Spring 1990 issue of *Daedalus*, the journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Included in the issue are articles on the historical roots and perspectives of literacy, the generational gaps that are increasingly noticeable, and the many difficulties of teaching unmotivated students in the public schools. Also discussed is the emerging importance of "numeracy" as arithmetic or mathematical literacy. Unfortunately for the improvement of literacy and numeracy in our schools and colleges, neither concept is adequately defined for educational purposes and objectives. Contributors to the issue are nonetheless aware of the great assistance that schools must obtain from family, community, *and* society. Illiteracy, in particular, is properly perceived as a social, cultural, and economic debility for both individuals and society.

Regional Perspectives

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), the National Governors' Association (NGA), the Southern Governors' Association (SGA), and the Southern Growth Policies Board (SGPB) are representative of the regional agencies advocating a more active role for higher education in promoting economic growth. The assistance of colleges and universities is needed in training technical manpower and in developing new and more competitive technology for export in a highly competitive international market. While conceding that the university's first responsibility is to teach, virtually all reports of this kind call for educational reforms that would involve university resources and expertise in the economic and technological advancement of regions, states, and local communities.

The Southern Regional Education Board was the first national or regional association to appoint a public commission for the explicit purpose of considering the quality of education and the issues involved in school and college relations. As early as 1981, a task force report addressed regional *and* national needs for improved quality at all levels of education. Expecting a serious teacher shortage in the mid-1980s, the SREB task force emphasized better preparation, more competitive salaries, higher standards, and greater public respect for the region's public school teachers.

Education could be improved further by recognizing the special needs of minority students, by ensuring that quality and diversity are not incompatible, and by removing some of the superfluous tasks that were imposed upon teachers by state legislators. Specifically identified as priorities were: (1) changes in the curricular content of teacher education programs, (2) modifications in teacher certification, (3) efforts to meet critical shortages in science and mathematics teachers, and (4) better leadership in the nation's schools. In advocating better coordination of school and college curricula the SREB report foreshadowed the thrust of many later reports. In their quest for student diversity and minimum standards, many high schools had indeed diluted

curricular content and tacitly accepted mediocrity as educational standards. Urgently needed were strengthened coordination of state and local efforts *and* improved communications between school and college authorities.

In 1988 the SREB Commission for Educational Quality identified twelve regional goals and challenges that southern states should meet by the year 2000. Several goals, with their accompanying recommendations, address the preparation of children for the first grade, the reduction of school dropout rates, and the better preparation of high school graduates entering college. As in previous SREB statements on regional goals and priorities, the Commission for Educational Quality is sensitive to regional disparities that undermine the quality and reputation of education in the South. To overcome such disparities, the improvement of student achievement is mandatory for elementary, secondary, and higher education—and the assessment of academic performance is crucial to the improved performance and productivity of southern schools and colleges. To help facilitate the fulfillment of regional goals, SREB has established "educational benchmarks" (Creech, 1990) to show the relative standing of southern states and to provide convincing information about the progress being made in southern education.

The National Governors' Association (1987) recommended that states distribute research funds on a competitive basis and thereby encourage universities to concentrate on areas of specialization in which they already excel. State government was encouraged: (1) to increase its funding of research equipment, (2) create or expand research centers that study productivity and labor-management relations, (3) facilitate through technology centers the transfer of knowledge between universities and business corporations, (4) promote and support exchanges of university faculty members and researchers in industry, and (5) review institutional policies that are disincentives to faculty members with research skills needed by business corporations.

In its frequently cited publication, *Cornerstone of Competition*, the Southern Governors Association (1986) addressed regional awareness of international competition and the South's need for international education. Among SGA's findings are: (1) the ineffectiveness with which geography is taught in public schools, (2) the inadequate preparation of school teachers to deal with international issues, and (3) the failure of the federal government to support language and area studies and to encourage exchange programs.

Among the recommendations made by the Southern Governors' Association are the teaching of geography as a distinctive subject matter throughout public schooling (K-12) and summer programs covering international topics for high school students. Opportunities to study foreign languages should be provided all elementary school children and certification requirements for teachers should include verbal fluency and listening skills in the languages they teach. Colleges and universities should require foreign languages as an admission standard and assess the international awareness of graduates certified as public school teachers.

The SGA report encourages states to provide assistance in economic development by establishing curricula and seminars for business leaders that focus on foreign cultures and business customs. They should also make funds available for the professional development of teachers and thereby permit them to participate more directly in the design of programs and instructional materials related to their teaching needs. Local business firms with international experience should be encouraged to work with school teachers, and states or cities with "sister relationships" abroad should include "sister school" agreements as part of their program.

The Southern Growth Policies Board's report *Halfway Home And A Long Way To Go* is the most interesting of the reports dealing with state policies for economic development. The intent of the SGPB's Commission on the Future of the

South was to produce "a short, readable report" that would identify and discuss "strategic objectives." Among those objectives are:

1. To provide a nationally competitive education for all southern students by 1992;
2. To mobilize resources to eliminate adult functional illiteracy;
3. To prepare a flexible, globally competitive work force;
4. To increase the economic development role of higher education;
5. To increase the South's capacity to generate and use technology;
6. To enhance the South's natural and cultural resources; *and*
7. To develop pragmatic leaders with a global vision.

The major weakness of the NGA, SGA, and SGPB reports is the lack of guidance and instruction given state-supported colleges and universities that must implement recommendations given in the reports. For the southern region in particular, the three reports are repetitive of numerous earlier commission reports dealing with barriers to the South's economic development. Hoover and Ratchford's (1951) study, *Economic Resources and Policies for the South*, can be cited as one of many such studies showing that the region's economic barriers are primarily cultural. Deficiencies in education and health care continue to impede the South's progress, and traditional notions of education, research, and technological innovation continue to retard cultural changes in many sections of the southern region.

Many of the recommendations and strategies are reminiscent of the Sloan Commission's (1980) report, *A Program for Renewed Partnership*. At that time profound changes in university-government relations had led to "a new period of retrenchment." Government was perceived as police and

not as a partner of research universities. In particular, the enforcement of federal laws and regulations had encroached on institutional autonomy and academic traditions—with the result that federal regulation contributed directly to increased educational costs. The leadership of universities in state government/higher education partnerships was regarded by the Sloan Commission as essential and "the largest possible scope" of institutional autonomy was needed!

The leadership of major state universities is noticeably absent from the NGA, SGA, and SGPB reports. If more effective partnerships among business, government, and higher education are to be established, the leadership of major research universities must be encouraged. The discovery and education of leaders for regional and state development are especially dependent upon institutions of higher education.

State Perspectives

During the mid-1980s twenty or more states reviewed their organization and governance of higher education in what they have referred to as "policy studies." The procedures and outcomes of these studies are similar in many respects to statewide planning or role-and-scope studies in the past. Policy studies in at least four states (Idaho, California, New Mexico, and Wisconsin) were conducted by legislative committees. Nine states (Colorado, Maine, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, and Texas) appointed study (blue ribbon) commissions as a means of reconsidering state government/higher education relations. Internal studies were conducted by governing or coordinating boards in five states (Florida, New York, Missouri, North Dakota, and Wisconsin), and four states (Mississippi, South Carolina, Louisiana, and North Carolina) employed the services of outside consultants.

Virtually all state-level studies have focused on the future of higher education and each state's internal preferences for re-organization. Few states have re-structured or

altered significantly the working relations among institutions, programs, or personnel *but* appreciable changes have been made and institutions of higher education are expected to play a more vital role in the state's continued economic development. Several states, such as Maryland, sought new forms of academic organization in which more effective governance and coordination would be assured. Other states engaged in variations of strategic planning but succeeded primarily in strengthening authority and responsibilities that their state boards already had

Proposals to close or merge institutions have been a major concern in several states. Other concerns have dealt with the elimination or reduction of "high cost" or "non-cost-effective" programs. One or two states expressed preferences for transformational leadership (with vision or charisma) and looked to more effective governance as a means of supplying that leadership. Several states must cope with public expectations that declining enrollments will mean either increased efficiency or reductions in state appropriations.

In states considering re-organization, the relative merits of governing, coordinating, and consolidated boards have been discussed. Thirteen states now have consolidated boards for all public institutions of higher education while ten states have a separate agency for community colleges. Georgia is one of the states in the first group and North Carolina is readily cited as an example of the second group. A third group of states—including Alabama, Tennessee, and South Carolina—have coordinating boards with limited authority concerning budget recommendations and program review (ECS, 1986; Newman, 1987).

Policy issues and concerns, as expressed in state-level studies, include most of the problems that are general or widely distributed throughout the nation. All states apparently need more explicit procedures for the formation of public policy, better leadership from governing or coordinating boards, more flexibility in the management of institutional resources, adaptive and responsive methods of promoting institutional effectiveness, and innovative ways of

"leading from their strength" while maintaining institutional and program diversity. In Georgia "An Assessment of the University System of Georgia" (Burge, Fincher, Hooper, and Langdale, 1989) relied heavily on the perceptions and judgments of presidents who must cope with the many difficulties of reconciling public policy with institutional resources and capabilities.

The findings of the ECS survey of policy studies are confirmed, in appreciable measure, by a report from the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (Quehl, 1988). From interviews with over 500 public, academic, and corporate leaders, the CASE study identifies five public interest issues believed to be paramount in American higher education: (1) the quality of higher education, (2) the cost of higher education, (3) opportunity and choice for qualified citizens, (4) higher education's relationship to employment and economic development, and (5) public understanding of the purposes of higher education.

College and university presidents interviewed in the study are primarily concerned about the increasing costs of education, public understanding, past promises and the credibility of higher education, and managing change. They are aware of the many pressures to change their institutions, to educate "new kinds of students," and to respond incessantly to the urgent demands of federal and state government.

Faculty members and chief academic officers are more concerned with the undergraduate curriculum and the quality of teaching. They recognize the need to balance teaching and scholarship, and they are aware of the many conflicts between explicit and implicit rewards as they function on college and university campuses. In contrast, students are concerned about the long-term value of their degrees, the accessibility of teaching faculty, and the rising costs of education.

The CASE study stresses that governors and state representatives are concerned about the role of higher education in economic development, the efficiency and accountability of higher education, and ways in which educational quality can be ensured. From a greater distance, corporate

executives and foundation officials worry about the "goodness of fit" between higher education and societal needs. Also of concern is the overall stature of higher education as one of the nation's principal social agents.

The convergence of informed national opinion on matters of *cost, quality,* and *public perceptions* is indeed relevant information for public and institutional leaders in higher education. Where so many perceive gaps, deficiencies, and defects in the nation's efforts to educate and develop its future leaders, there is sufficient cause for concern!

Other Perspectives

The appearance of Allan Bloom's (1987) book, *The Closing of the American Mind,* on best-seller lists is further indication of public disenchantment with what young adults study and learn in college. Although the major target of Bloom's criticisms is cultural relativism in the teaching of moral and ethical values, he argues forcefully that western civilization has legitimate claims to its centrality in educational thought and discussion—and he suggests in equally strong terms that our current infatuation with non-western cultures undermines an intellectual and cultural heritage of which we should be proud.

Bloom argues that our colleges no longer produce graduates who are known for their piety, their wisdom, or their manners. Foolish notions of cultural relativism have turned our classrooms into places where students no longer learn to be industrious, to respect the law, to love their families, and to celebrate the founding of our nation. In the 1980s education is *not* concerned with the natural rights of man, and an openness to all kinds of people and societies may be the only virtue that is consistently instilled in the nation's college students.

The purpose of the university, in Bloom's opinion, is to maintain the centrality of philosophic inquiry, liberal education, and "the questions" that mankind must address continuously and seriously. In doing so, universities must

keep alive the works of those who have addressed such questions in the past and whose written thoughts have become an essential part of our cultural heritage.

Bloom is easily dismissed as an elitist who describes education in highly idealistic terms. His views of education and his conceptions of truth will not serve the educational needs of 12 million college students in a culturally pluralistic democracy. And yet, his criticisms of higher education are frequently telling. Colleges are often mindless places in which ideas of substance and merit are seldom discussed. Many campuses are inhabited by both faculties and students who find it *embarrassing* to discuss (in college classrooms) the intellectual, moral, and ethical development of human minds and character.

E.D. Hirsch's (1987) *Cultural Literacy* has also appeared on best-seller lists and, in a different way, has given assistance to national thought and discussion concerning educational problems and issues. Hirsch was a member of the small group who suggested items for the national assessment of what seventeen-year-olds know. He is obviously convinced that literacy is dependent upon a common fund of knowledge that all school and college students should acquire. By concentrating on skills instead of knowledge, public schools have robbed students of their cultural heritage and doomed most graduates to a life of cultural illiteracy.

Hirsch supplies a list of over 4,600 terms and concepts that should be known by those who are culturally literate. Included in the list are dates, names, places, events, titles, and other words or phrases that presumably should be taught in public schools. To some reviewers, Hirsch's appreciation of human knowledge as a continuously developing aspect of civilization is naive and his understanding of educational and cognitive psychology is embarrassingly weak. Like Bloom, Hirsch views education as more simple and direct than classroom teaching and learning can possibly be! To Bloom, education is basically a matter of discussing great ideas with intelligent and interested students. To Hirsch, education is apparently the dissemination of truth by telling

students what they ought to know. Hirsch's efforts have resulted in an attractive *Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* (1988), with the subtitle, "What Every American Needs To Know." The volume contains a wealth of interesting and factual information but its usefulness in school and college classrooms is unclear.

Page Smith (1990) adds a different interpretation to national thought and discussion about the quality of higher education in the 1980s. Smith, a well known historian, roundly condemns the academic fundamentalism that he believes to be responsible for the human condition of education beyond the high school. The academic mind has been closed for many years, in his judgment, and it is actively engaged in "killing the spirit" of teachers and students who seek truth in American college and university campuses. It would comfort many academicians *if* Smith's book could be dismissed as merely a garrulous complaint about the university's many blemishes, but no responsible academician should do so.

Smith's major targets for criticism are the undue emphasis placed on research and publication, promotion and tenure policies that reward academic mediocrity, and academe's lack of receptivity to new ideas in the scholarly pursuit of truth. He is also critical of the university's increasing bondage to government and business for research funds. The "pervasiveness of the business ethos" in our universities has led to "an intense spirit of rivalry" (*and*, Smith does not add, a compulsion to rate and rank institutions and programs that ritualistically ranks Harvard or Stanford as Number One).

The social sciences have become "nonsciences" that exclude the "Big Questions." Both literature and history have been led astray by excessive emulation of the natural sciences and, as a result, the humanities have become "inhuman." Much to the relief of the behavioral scientist's ego, Smith is historically dated and he leans too strongly to Thorstein Veblen and Robert M. Hutchins. His footing is

much better in critiquing "fashionable new problems" in philosophy, "cliometrics" in history, and the "nonsense" of critical interpretation in literature.

How would Smith revive the spirit that is being killed so callously by academic fundamentalists? Apparently he would restore a reverence for "the world of the spirit" and seek a (Hegelian) synthesis of "Classical Christian" and "Secular Democratic" consciousness. He is confident that "enduring elements of both traditions" can be "powerfully reanimated and enthusiastically reconstructed."

In writing about new skills and new attitudes in the humanities, Cheney (1988) scolds colleges and universities for some of the faults that Smith dissects so well. Cheney's report on "Humanities in America" praises "public programming" in the humanities but finds obstructions in the university's "publish or perish" policies and its relegation of "work in public humanities" to the academically dubious status of public service. Public programming in the humanities is, in Cheney's estimation, so extensive that it has become "a kind of parallel school, one that has grown up outside established institutions of education." Thus, the humanities continue to lose their centrality on college campuses as scholars overspecialize and compartmentalize their research (and publishing) interests. The excesses of scholarly pursuits in the humanities should be counterbalanced by academic policies that encourage publications of general significance, reward excellence in teaching, and move toward "intellectually coherent curricula."

As president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Ernest Boyer (1990) calls for a reconsideration of scholarship within the American professoriate. Research and publication are unduly emphasized in the evaluation of faculty productivity because publications are relatively easy to assess. Boyer finds, however, an undercurrent of dissatisfaction among the nation's faculty members. At least sixty percent of the professoriate believe that teaching effectiveness should take precedence over publications

as a criterion for promotion. To Boyer, this finding suggests that *the full range of* faculty aspirations and commitments must be considered in decisions that affect professorial lives.

Boyer believes that all faculty members should establish their credentials as a scholar by demonstrating their capabilities in original research and/or the study of "a serious intellectual problem." Such a demonstration is (or ought to be) the purpose of theses and dissertations. Having established their scholarly credentials, all faculty members should stay in touch with their respective disciplines and "remain professionally alive." Active research and/or scholarship is but one way of doing so. A third "mandate," as seen by Boyer, is to hold all faculty to "the highest standards of integrity." A fourth is the careful assessment of faculty performance in the four kinds of scholarship identified by Boyer.

Boyer's four areas or functions of scholarship diminish his recommendations. *Discovery, integration, application,* and *teaching* are neither intuitively appealing nor logically compelling categories by which to assess and reward the performance and services of college and university faculty members. Each can be translated into more descriptive and/or functional terms, but that will not resolve the more important question of differential weights that must be assigned in promotion, tenure, and salary decisions. Whatever the labels, discovery and integration will be collapsed back into research, application will pass for service, and teaching will still be teaching—*and* at the low end of public, administrative, and professorial priorities.

Nonetheless, Boyer's reconsideration of scholarship should be given a full-and-fair hearing. No observer or critic of higher education will doubt that the priorities of the American professoriate require attention. The faculties of the nation's colleges and universities are the key to educational solutions and without revisions in their scholarly incentives and rewards, the plight of education will continue. Some hope may be gleaned for the 1990s by the replacement

of retiring faculty members with "a new generation of scholars" —but not much!

The perspectives of Bloom, Hirsch, Smith, Cheney, and Boyer follow two major studies of the American professoriate that were published in the latter part of the 1980s. Bowen and Schuster (1986), in a study funded by the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association and College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF), drew a representative sample of thirty-eight institutions and coordinated onsite interviews with 128 administrators, 127 department heads, and 225 faculty members. The results of their study depict the plight of college and university faculty members in an era when public demands and expectations are changing rapidly and the academic life is marred by conflicting public and institutional policies. Bowen and Shuster find American professors to be dedicated and competent but "dispirited" and "devalued."

From interviews with faculty on sixteen representative campuses and the Carnegie Foundation surveys of college faculty, Burton Clark (1987) paints a similar picture of those who teach and conduct research in institutions of higher education. He points out that the generation who staffed American colleges and universities in their years of rapid growth and expansion are passing from the scene and the adequacy of their replacements are much in doubt. Clark, too, finds evidence of faculty dedication and competence *but* with noticeable losses in faculty morale, self-respect, and sense of well-being. The gist of Clark's finding can be simplified as a national need for periodic and effective *renewal* of the nation's underappreciated teaching faculty.

The gist of the preceding discussion may be as follows: *if* "another era of commission reports" and "other perspectives" can stimulate or provoke serious thought and discussion—about the purposes and meaning of a college education—among the nation's 600,000 faculty members (or an appreciable proportion thereof)—with concerted attention to how faculty can develop better courses, teach students more

effectively, and assess more objectively what students learn, the reports will exceed all reasonable expectations of their various authors and sponsoring agencies. There is evidence, however, that the active involvement of the nation's college and university faculties will not be easily obtained.

On every college campus dedicated, conscientious faculty members can be found. These faculty members are sincerely interested in teaching and they teach with the best interests of students in mind. Among their colleagues, however, are teaching faculty who have become cynical and callous in their classroom practices and in their expectations of student learning. If every campus has at least one sincerely dedicated faculty member, every campus will also have at least two faculty members who have found teaching frustrating and unrewarding. Many such faculty members have "leveled out" and seek the personal satisfactions of life in moonlighting, freelancing, or other personal pursuits.

Many observers and critics believe that the major source of faculty frustration is the incentive and reward system that prevails on many university campuses. Surely Page Smith exaggerates in his discussion of promotion and tenure policies, but many faculty members will agree with virtually all that he has written. The emphasis placed upon faculty publication is excessive, and the pressures upon assistant professors to publish are too intense not to detract from scholarly teaching. To earn the approval of their colleagues, faculty members must not only publish, they must publish in reputable journals that pride themselves on high rejection rates. Faculty reward systems thus give refereed journals and their editors an undeserved role as gatekeepers for scholarly and literary standards. Faculty members who cannot "play the game" of writing journal articles and books for unknown reviewers are severely handicapped—and no sage can tell us how many excellent college teachers are lost in skirmishes that have little to do with teaching effectiveness in college classrooms.

ASSESSING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

In secondary and higher education testing, measurement, and evaluation are perennial issues. All such issues come home to roost on assessment perches. The questions are numerous and difficult to answer: what is the purpose of assessment in schools and colleges; who is to do the assessing and who will be assessed; how will assessment be carried out; and what uses will be made of the assessment results? From the beginning of the testing movement following World War I, testing has been justified as a means of facilitating learning, improving instruction, counseling students, and placing students in more suitable courses and programs. Throughout their history, however, testing and measurement have been re-directed to program and teacher evaluation, to the prediction of student grades, and to selective admissions at undergraduate and graduate levels. Despite the good intentions of advocates, assessment is expected by cynics to follow a similar rise and fall.

The NIE report, *Involvement in Learning*, makes the best case for assessment by linking student achievement and feedback in ways that will encourage active participation in learning. Assessment is regarded by the NIE Study Group as a particularly effective tool for clarifying expectations and thereby increasing student involvement. The use of pre-tests and post-tests in assessment would permit the measurement of improvements in student performance and thereby encourage institutions of higher education to assess and/or evaluate how students grow and develop as a result of their college education.

One recommendation, therefore, is to the effect that faculty and academic deans should design and implement a systematic program to assess the knowledge, capacities and skills developed by students in academic and co-curricular programs. To accomplish these tasks, the report advocates the widest possible range of assessment and testing techniques, including essays, interviews, portfolios, and performance examinations, as well as traditional standardized tests.

The authors take for granted that common parameters of student learning can be identified and that tests can be devised for pre-testing and post-testing to assess significant changes in learning and achievement.

Another recommendation cautions that academic administrators and faculty should ensure that their testing instruments and methods are appropriate for the knowledge, capacities and skills addressed—and for the stated objectives of undergraduate education at their institutions. Following this recommendation is one favoring the active participation of faculty in the development, adoption, administration and scoring of the instruments and procedures used in student assessment. In turn, student evaluations of academic programs should be an essential requirement for strengthening the quality of undergraduate education.

The ECS report challenges institutions to improve their assessment of student performance while the CFAT report recommends the elimination of the SAT and ACT when they are not used specifically for selective admissions. A strong preference is expressed for a written essay as an admission requirement, and student achievement should be assessed primarily for advisement purposes. The CFAT report does endorse, however, the measurement of outcomes by means of senior theses, senior seminars or colloquia, and portfolios of student activities as "campus citizens." Authors of the AASCU report state a preference for educational methods that facilitate student learning and suggest that assessment should be used to determine student progress toward skills and competencies that are explicit in the attainment of a bachelor's degree.

The AAC report is skeptical of the value of testing in undergraduate programs. The report states that higher education is not yet in possession of generally useful means for the sophisticated assessment of academic programs and the integrated cumulative intellectual growth and capacities of students. The report does concede, however, that there are many procedures available for assessing particular aspects of higher education, and appreciable faith is expressed in

the capabilities of faculty to devise their own assessment procedures. A joint trustee/faculty/student committee on assessment should oversee the legitimate interest and responsibilities of each group and thereby serve public demands for accountability.

Surprisingly, the AAC report is opposed to the use of comprehensive exams. Preparation for such exams evidently is not the best use of a student's time, and such exams may, in fact, be disruptive of other educational experiences that are coming to fruition toward the end of the senior year. It should be possible to invent intellectual exercises that will allow students to demonstrate what they have learned and to show that they are able to synthesize their learning without indulging in what the report calls "the frantic memorization and cult of coverage that characterize comprehensive exams in their worst incarnation."

The national endorsement of assessment has been joined by the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE). A policy statement issued by SHEEO in 1987 is emphatic in its recommendation of systematic programs of assessment that use multiple measures of student learning and evaluate program quality. An occasional paper (Rossmann and El-Khawas, 1987) published by ACE gives a much needed overview of assessment and provides a rationale whereby colleges and universities can develop systematic procedures for the assessment of learning outcomes. With funds from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (NIE's successor) AAHE has conducted national and regional workshops in which assessment methods and techniques are publicized and/or demonstrated. In particular, AAHE has used its "house organ" the *AAHE Bulletin* to disseminate information about institutional uses of assessment concepts and methods.

One outcome of "the assessment movement" is seen in ACE's annual report on *Campus Trends*. The latest report (El-Khawas, 1990) indicates that 80 percent of the nation's

institutions of higher education are engaged in some form of assessment. Academic administrators generally support the use of assessment in institutional and program accreditation but less than half of the surveyed group agrees that assessment will lead to the improvement of undergraduate education at the baccalaureate level.

Implications for Reform

The challenge in assessment is at least tri-fold: (1) to be assessable, educational outcomes must be defined in ways that make good sense to college instructors and students, (2) instructional and learning outcomes must then be assessed by means that are creditable and fair, and (3) the results (outcomes) of assessment must be useful and wisely used in the improvement of both teaching and learning. Implied in this challenge is an urgent need for a more explicit rationale for imposing assessment upon institutions that are already hard-pressed to demonstrate their effectiveness to critics, public officials, and accrediting agencies. In their advocacy of assessment as a solution to educational problems, many commission reports are much too vague about the relative merits of assessment for purposes of public accountability, institutional and program accreditation, and/or instructional improvement.

The implementation of recommendations for assessment would be appreciably enhanced if institutions were encouraged to develop assessment programs with specific objectives, procedures, and outcomes. Institutional rationales would make more educational sense if they fully acknowledged instructional improvement as the *first* priority of assessment efforts. In brief, unless assessment methods are designed and developed with attention to the learning needs of students and the teaching interests of faculty, their usefulness in the improvement of undergraduate education will remain in doubt. And unless assessment procedures and results are creditable and fair, in the judgment of critics and constituencies, assessment will not serve the purposes

of accountability and accreditation. There are many reasons to believe that the assessment of educational outcomes should be an institutional responsibility that (in order of priority): (1) assists in the improvement of undergraduate education, (2) provides useful information in institutional and program accreditation, and (3) demonstrates institutional accountability to governing boards, state officials, and other societal sponsors.

The assessment of basic skills of literacy poses a particular challenge which has not been met by high schools or colleges. The literacy of high school and college graduates is the ubiquitous source of disenchantment with public schooling and a major factor in virtually all criticisms of collegiate education. Literacy is also the most conspicuous area in which the close cooperation of high schools and colleges is needed. The content, requirements, and standards of high school coursework are often mis-aligned with high school graduation and college entrance requirements. In much the same manner, course requirements and instructor expectations at the college level are often contrary to student performance and achievements. If assessment is to assist in "bridging the gap" between secondary and higher education, more consistent, comparable, *and* creditable measures of the basic skills of literacy must be constructed, developed, and used.

All participants in education apparently agree that reading, writing, and arithmetic are basic skills, but each level of education takes its own preferred route to defining, teaching, and testing basic skills. The College Board has provided excellent assistance in its efforts to define basic academic competencies that are needed in college (CEEB, 1983) but widely accepted measures of such competencies have not followed. The successful resolution of the nation's "crisis in literacy" requires better consensus on the basic skills that high school graduates should demonstrate upon graduation, the basic academic competencies that college freshmen should possess, and the advanced learning skills that presumably are developed in the first two years of postsecondary education. Implementation of national

commission recommendations thus demand better attention to the many problems of definition and the appropriate methods of teaching, as well as the multiple methods of assessment that will be required.

In the assessment of educational outcomes, an encouraging beginning has been made. There are many technical problems, however, to be solved in developing multi-level, multi-stage measures of educational achievement. Unless different kinds of assessment methods can be developed for reading, writing, and reasoning skills—and unless assessment results are comparable at different levels of educational progress (e.g., for entering freshmen, rising juniors, and graduating seniors)—assessment methods will not serve well the educational purposes and objectives for which they are ostensibly developed. Comparable information on the different stages of student achievement should be the *sine qua non* of assessment, and the cooperation of students in obtaining comparable measures of student performance over a period of years is by no means assured. Thus, the tactical difficulties of multi-level, multi-stage assessment will tax institutional resources for smaller colleges and test staff ingenuity for larger institutions.

The challenge of relating assessment methods and results to the improvement of undergraduate education is even greater. Assessment results must be useful to college students as individual participants, and they must provide college instructors with information that can be used in improving classroom instruction. In addition to learning efforts and instructional methods, concerted attention must be given to curricular improvements that focus teaching and learning objectives on desired outcomes. This is especially true in the development of basic academic competencies and in meeting the challenge of general education. As indicated earlier, the crucial factor in all such instructional and curricular matters is the active involvement and participation of college and university faculty. Unless assistance is given to classroom instructors in the assessment and evaluation of

student learning, the examining-and-grading practices of faculty will tell one story and institutional assessment will tell another.

The many challenges of assessment must be met in the midst of numerous distractions. Current assessment efforts evidently do *not* serve the purposes of those who advocate national goals and standards for public schools, national achievement examinations for high school seniors, and radical changes in the SAT and other standardized tests. One group, the National Commission on Testing and Public Policy (1990), has recommended that educational and employment testing be restructured. They condemn the way in which multiple-choice and/or standardized tests are "overrelied upon" in the allocation of educational and employment opportunities, in the development of human talent, and in the implementation of social policies.

The national achievement examinations proposed by the Bush administration lend further confusion to the role of assessment in the improvement of undergraduate education. Advocates of national goals, standards, and examinations are convinced, no doubt, that the problems of public education cannot be solved without national policies that will be based ostensibly on the empirical findings of nationwide assessment and/or evaluation. Critics of national examinations are opposed on many grounds, not the least of which is the extensive testing that is already required at various levels of elementary and secondary education. The extent to which national goals, standards, and examinations will lead to better prepared college students—and thereby to more effective assessment of educational outcomes—is, of course, in doubt.

The "history of testing controversies" inspires no confidence in the construction and development of national exams that will be well received, widely used, and wisely interpreted. Advocates of national examinations imply that such exams would test primarily for general knowledge that is taught in the nation's classrooms—and not for aptitudes,

skills, or interests that are acquired in other places. All of us could agree that factual knowledge is (or should be) the easiest of all outcomes to test, but we will not agree on the facts of knowledge that should be included in the test. The test devised for the NEH study of seventeen-year-olds is a "classic study" in what not to do. Instead of measuring what students should know, the test measures what they do not know. If national exams are to serve valuable educational purposes, they must be based on better distinctions between knowledge and competence—and the objectives of the test must be clearly communicated to students, parents, and the general public.

In summary, the NIE report gives a commendable emphasis to assessment and feedback as a means of encouraging student involvement in learning. Knowledge of results is still a sound psychological principle of learning, and active participation in the teaching-learning processes that typify college classrooms is still an excellent way of facilitating retention and use of the knowledge and skills acquired under conditions of formal instruction. Thus the planning and organizing of assessment programs necessarily require the active involvement and participation of academic officials and teaching faculties. The assessment of educational outcomes should be encouraged and supported by legislative and governing bodies but not mandated as a function of funding or financial support. Assessment and evaluation are institutional responsibilities that are fulfilled best with institutional initiation and cooperation. No institution, however, should make a commitment to assessment without recognizing that assessment methods must be adapted and/or developed over a period of several years. One-year snapshots of student achievement will not benefit students and they will not improve classroom instruction.

IMPROVING UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

The crucial assumptions underlying most national commission reports are: (a) the quality of undergraduate education has declined over the past three decades, and (b) quality, integrity, and/or coherence can be restored by concerted attention to general education and/or the liberal arts. Unfortunately, the recommendations made in the reports differ appreciably in their implications and in their promise for implementation.

The reports do agree, to an appreciable extent, that undergraduate education can be strengthened best through the requirement of additional coursework in basic or fundamental education. All concerned commissions presumably would increase course requirements at the freshman and sophomore levels of baccalaureate degree programs, and none would be reluctant to lengthen the time taken to earn a degree if more time is necessary.

Reclaiming the Humanities

The NEH report makes a special case for the humanities in undergraduate education. The report—and its provocative recommendations—is predicated on the observation that the humanities have lost their central place in baccalaureate programs. A substantial majority of students now graduate from college without exposure to western civilization, American literature and history, and the civilization of classical Greece and Rome. The most revealing recommendation in the report states that:

> The nation's colleges and universities must reshape their undergraduate curricula based on a clear vision of what constitutes an educated person, regardless of major, and on the study of history, philosophy, languages, and literature. (p. 2)

Closely related to this recommendation are encouragements to college and university presidents to take responsibility and to reward excellent teaching—and to college faculties in escaping the confines of excessive departmentalism and in helping establish a core of common studies. The report is particularly appealing in its encouragement of academic programs that would permit "all students to know a common culture rooted in civilization's lasting vision, its highest shared ideals and aspirations, and its heritage." In many respects, the report is an eloquent plea for cultural literacy.

Unlike the NIE and AAC reports, the NEH study group is more explicit about what should be restored to the undergraduate curriculum. Much needed is a better balance between breadth and depth; more frequent use of original literary, philosophical, and historical texts; better continuity in humanistic studies, improved teaching or greater faculty competence and expertise; and conviction that the humanities are not merely an educational luxury. The report is quite explicit in its preferences for particular books and authors that undergraduate students should read, discuss, and assimilate.

Regrettably, the report finds that too many college courses in the humanities are taught with "excruciating dullness or pedantry." In introductory or lower division courses, too many courses are taught by graduate assistants or adjunct, part-time faculty. In much the same manner as the AAC report but with a little less fervor, the NEH report lays much of the blame at the feet of graduate education. The rapid growth of higher education in the 1960s left little time for the professional acculturation of college teachers and many faculty members in the 1980s teach with habits and expectations established in an earlier era.

The steady erosion of the humanities in undergraduate education is attributed, perhaps too easily, to a collective loss of nerve and faith on the part of college administrators and teaching faculty. The report at this point is insufficiently appreciative of the changing demands and expectations

brought to college campuses by older, nontraditional, and "new" students who were the first generation of their families to seek the benefits and advantages of higher education.

The NEH report clearly denies any preference for "a return to an earlier time when the classical curriculum was the only curriculum and college was available to only a privileged few." And it wisely acknowledges that restoration of the humanities is "a task each college and university will have to accomplish for itself." It is unfortunate, therefore, that the report will be read by many research and teaching faculty as a declamation of faith in classical, elitist doctrines of education.

Indepth Study

The core of the recommendations in the AAC report is some kind of "study in depth" before individuals complete degree requirements. This study-in-depth evidently would meld together most of the requirements for synthesizing student learning and demonstrating student performance.

This requirement of the AAC report evidently would ensure that learners comprehend some complex structure of knowledge, gain some degree of understanding and control, and (by implication) overcome the disadvantages of the narrow specialization that major fields now encourage. Indepth study presumably would present a central core of method and theory that introduces learners to the explanatory power of academic disciplines, provides a basis for subsequent study, and "force" students to experience the range of disciplinary topics and the variety of disciplinary tools. Studies in depth presumably are as relevant to professional and applied fields as they are to the traditional disciplines in arts and sciences.

In discussing "the methods and processes, modes of access to understanding and judgment, that should inform all study," the AAC report gives a confusing picture of the objectives and expected outcomes of undergraduate education. In addition to studies in depth, the report calls for an unusual

mixture of knowledge, information, skills, competencies, attitudes, beliefs, and values. Authors of the report have been unable to agree on the purposes of education and they are often uncertain as to whether they are declaring for knowledge, intellectual competence, or shared values. There are occasional hints that all three kinds of outcomes are desirable, but the report does not consider the relative merits of each kind of learning as an instructional or teaching objective, as the purpose and/or meaning of education, and as teaching or learning expectations.

The "methods and processes, modes of access to understanding and judgment, that should inform all study" are: (1) inquiry, abstract logical thinking, critical analysis; (2) literacy: writing, reading, speaking, listening; (3) understanding numerical data; (4) historical consciousness; (5) science; (6) values; (7) art; and (8) international and multicultural experiences.

The AASCU report recommends the development of strategies that will strengthen the interactions of students and faculty members. The learning that takes place in student/teacher interactions and among students themselves is an essential feature of undergraduate education and its facilitation should be assigned the highest priority. Ways of fostering faculty vitality and excellence are: (a) rewarding outstanding teaching, (b) involving students in faculty research, and (c) supporting faculty renewal efforts. Recommended by the CFAT report are distinguished teaching professorships, encouragement of scholar-teacher ideals, minigrants for teaching faculty, and the continued professional development of faculty members and department heads.

In several later reports the AAC (1989, 1990) gives better sustenance and momentum to its recommendations for indepth study and addresses more directly the implications of general education for undergraduate curricula. Study-in-depth is linked to liberal learning and to majors in the arts and sciences. In cooperation with learned societies in the arts and sciences, the AAC asked twelve task forces to consider concentrated study in major fields, their contributions

to liberal learning in the lives of students, and ways in which studies-in-depth can be strengthened. Included in the twelve fields of study were: biology, physics, and mathematics; economics, political science, psychology, and sociology; history, philosophy, and religion; interdisciplinary studies; and women's studies. Abridgements of the twelve task force reports are provided in a volume entitled *Reports From The Field*, and unabridged reports have been published by (or may be obtained from) the respective professional societies co-sponsoring the effort.

General education is defined by an AAC task group (1988) as "cultivation of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that all of us use and live by during most of our lives." The development of such knowledge, skills, and attitudes should continue throughout life, and a major responsibility of higher education is to assist students in identifying perspectives, weighing evidence, and making wise decisions. The challenge to college faculties and administrators is to "rethink the content" of general education courses and to give better attention to the development of individual competence and skills. In particular, colleges and universities should help "students assume responsibility for their own intellectual development."

The AAC effort to reduce the many confusions of liberal learning and general education should be welcomed. There are meaningful distinctions to be made between the two concepts (as many scholars have shown), but no sustained effort has been made in the recent past to address those distinctions. Gary Miller (1990) assures us that general education is *not* synonymous with liberal education, interdisciplinary studies, undergraduate teaching, or prescribed programs of study. General education, to the contrary, is self-consciously guided by "its stated purposes" and the comprehensiveness of general education is something more than "unspecialized" knowledge and competence. Miller and the AAC task group would agree that general education has much to do with democratic processes and cultural diversity.

Student Involvement

All teachers, instructors, and professors should agree that students should become more actively involved in their own education. Recommendations to this effect stem from theories of learning in which active participation by learners is a crucial variable. Supporting research is readily cited to show that learning is directly related to the quantity and quality of learning efforts.

The active involvement of students, as recommended in the NIE report, should lead to demonstrable improvements in knowledge, capacities, skills and attitudes between time of entrance and time of graduation. The active involvement of undergraduate students in their own education is also implied by many recommendations in the AASCU, ECS, and CFAT reports. Institutions of higher education should seek ways in which they can build greater student involvement (ECS), recognize and integrate public and community service into undergraduate programs (AASCU), and require a "service project" as an integral part of undergraduate education with academic credit (CFAT). To produce these demonstrable improvements, however, colleges and universities must establish clearly expressed and publicly announced standards of performance for awarding degrees.

The NIE report unfortunately assumes that student involvement can be increased by the reallocation of institutional resources to the first and second year of undergraduate study. The reallocation of resources should permit faculty to make greater use of active modes of teaching and to require that students take greater responsibility for their learning. Faculty should also learn to use the learning technologies that are available, and they should insist that the use of these technologies permit more personal contact between students and faculty on intellectual issues.

Related recommendations would foster systematic programs of guidance and advisement. A less directly related recommendation concerns the creation of learning communities that evidently would be established within colleges and universities and organized around specific themes or

tasks. Another means of increasing student involvement is through adequate physical support and recognition of faculty and student participation in campus activities.

If excellence is to be achieved in undergraduate education, the expectations of both teaching faculty and students should be raised; faculties and chief academic officers should agree upon and disseminate a statement of the knowledge, capacities, and skills that students should develop prior to graduation. All four-year college degrees would require at least two full years of liberal education. Should this require the extension of undergraduate programs beyond the usual four years, colleges should not hesitate to impose such a requirement. In expanding the requirements of liberal education for baccalaureate degrees, the report states that curricula content should be addressed not only to subject matter but to the development of analytic problem-solving communication and skills. In addition, students and faculty should work together to integrate knowledge from the various academic disciplines.

Many recommendations for educational improvement are rightly addressed to the college and university officials responsible for undergraduate curriculum and instruction. Other recommendations appeal to other officials who influence faculty decisions and actions. Graduate schools should require applicants for graduate work to present evidence of a broad undergraduate liberal arts education. Graduate deans should develop ways of helping prospective faculty learn about the history, organization, and culture of American higher education—and develop their own understanding of teaching and learning. State and system-level officials should minimize the intrusion of their agencies into the daily affairs of public colleges. And, of course, accrediting agencies should hold colleges and universities accountable for clear statements of expectations for student learning. State officials should establish special and alternative funding for colleges to encourage efforts that promote student involvement and institutional assessment. Some recommendations give advice to students on such matters as seeking an

intellectual mentor, taking advantage of advising and counseling services, involving themselves in campus activities, trying to attend college full-time, not working unless it is related to their education, and taking at least one independent study course and one internship during their college careers.

The NIE report unrealistically suggests that at the end of their sophomore year a college student should be able to read the *Scientific American* and explain to friends the theories, methods and conclusions covered in the major article. At the beginning of their junior year, college students should be able to read a foreign newspaper and recount to friends the world, national and cultural issues presented. In the middle of their junior year they should be able to describe "a high quality analysis" of a particular set of data, text or artifacts in their major field. Many colleges should be pleased if *most* members of their faculty could meet such splendid requirements.

Curricular Reform

A common weakness of virtually all national commission reports is their lack of sensitivity to what is actually taking place on a majority of the nation's college campuses and in a majority of the nation's classrooms. Institutions of higher education will be hard pressed to meet the challenge of cultural and/or societal assimilation while reestablishing the centrality of liberal learning. With clear indications that both national and state policies currently favor the concentration of public resources in secondary schools, it will be quite difficult for colleges and universities to obtain the financial support needed for curricular reform.

Another noticeable weakness of commission recommendations is in the poor direction and guidance they give to the strengthening of undergraduate curricula. To an embarrassing extent, several reports deal with a stereotype of undergraduate education that no longer serves educational purposes. To teach the classics, the development of western

civilization, the best of English literature, and the rudiments of abstract, logical thinking to educationally disadvantaged students is a challenge that some institutions and some faculty will decline.

More specifically, the majority of the commission reports fail to address the substance and content of college curricula in ways that will make sense to the majority of college faculty. Virtually ignored in all reports is the judgment of the Carnegie Foundation (1977) that major fields of study are "a success story" and only passing references are made to the fact that American colleges and universities teach well what they are best prepared to teach: those areas of specialization that merit and sustain the research and teaching interests of faculty. To a similar degree, the reports do not take sufficient notice of the generation gap between the learning needs and interests of students *and* the teaching interests of faculty. As the Carnegie Foundation pointed out, the majority of our students are enrolled in professional and applied fields of study while the majority of our faculty have been trained in traditional disciplines.

Many structural or organizational problems are overlooked in the major commission reports. There are occasional bows in the direction of distributional requirements, electives, and specialized or advanced coursework as the three ingredients that go into a two-layer cake, but there is an accompanying reluctance to consider the design, development, substance, and content of academic programs. There has been even more reluctance to address the many problems of course planning, development, and evaluation where the levers of curricular reform undoubtedly are found.

The AAC project on liberal learning, study-in-depth, and the arts and sciences major has sound bearings in its involvement of the learned societies that serve as national spokesmen for the arts and sciences. Professional societies (and their "approved" graduate programs) have a profound influence on undergraduate curricula. Each must share honors for the successes of undergraduate major fields, and each must share the blame for excessive specialization and

the imposition of graduate school admission requirements on undergraduate curricula. A conspicuous absence from the AAC task forces is the Modern Language Association, the learned society with the most direct influence on the teaching of English grammar, composition, and literature.

In its use of discipline-oriented task forces the AAC effectively counters some of the organizational problems by considering the objectives and requirements of introductory courses—and by distinguishing between middle-range and advanced coursework. As a general finding, introductory courses appear to deal with basic concepts, principles, and methods that will be more closely considered in later courses. Middle-range courses tend to focus on "core courses" within the discipline and the skills and competencies that will be needed for mastery of the student's major. Advanced courses evidently deal with individual research projects (and other subject matter or skills related to graduate education). Explicit in the task force charge is the question of "capstone experiences" for seniors. The requirement of a capstone course, in the manner of the ante-bellum president's course on moral philosophy, is a perennial issue that no institution successfully resolves—for more than a year or two. As a result of such difficulties, many dysfunctional features of undergraduate curricula continue to be structural in origin, if not in nature.

A project that acknowledges the influence of graduate and professional education on undergraduate programs has been reported by Stark and Lowther (1988). Identified in the project were ten educational outcomes that bind liberal education with professional study, various issues that require resolution, and strategies for curricular integration. Among the educational outcomes of professional education are competence in communication, critical thinking, aesthetic sensibility, professional identity, ethical standards, adaptability, leadership, a scholarly concern for improvement, and individual responsibility for continued professional growth. Among the challenges issued to academic leaders are formal structures that reinforce relations between liberal and

professional faculties, informal learning activities that bring together the faculties and students of liberal and professional education, and further studies of the parallel curricular patterns and common outcomes in diverse fields of undergraduate professional study and liberal education. Efforts to "extend, strengthen, broaden, and interrelate" liberal studies as a means of restoring educational balance suggest to Stark and Lowther that faculties have not heard similar calls for "a sense of community" and the integration of liberal and professional studies.

Another difficult challenge has been issued by Groennings and Wiley (1990). The general purpose of education is increasingly perceived as preparation for the world in which students will live. With that perception there are increasing expectations that college curricula must enhance the readiness of students for international cooperation in a global economy. Academic disciplines, on the other hand, are frequently perceived as the "gatekeepers of educational change." University faculties, curricula, and research are often based in academic departments that owe strong allegiance to their respective disciplines. As colleges and universities become increasingly international in service missions, continuing education, technical assistance, student and faculty exchange, and program development, the challenge of internationalizing the disciplines follows. Related to such a challenge are public expectations concerning the assistance of higher education in economic growth, in adapting to technological change, and in coping with many other demands of rapid cultural change.

Implications for Reform

The improvement of undergraduate education is, in many respects, the most important challenge confronting higher education in the 1990s. National commission reports call *good* attention to that challenge, and they include many recommendations that should receive careful consideration by the nation's colleges and universities. Unfortunately for

substantive and enduring improvement, the recommendations of most commission reports are too numerous and too diffused to gain a sympathetic hearing in faculty councils and committees. Many recommendations run cross-grain to academic beliefs and values concerning: (a) institutional autonomy and independence, (b) faculty prerogatives in curriculum and instruction, and (c) the incredible pressures to which high school and college curricula are subject.

The humanities are unlikely to regain "their rightful place" in the undergraduate curriculum because of the intense competition from other subject matter and other advocates of curricular revision. An appreciable majority of the nation's college students are now enrolled in professional and applied fields of study. They seek educational courses and programs that will lead to gainful employment and career satisfactions. In similar manner, some recommendations for core curricula are contrary to student learning needs and to faculty teaching interests. The majority of college faculty are specialists in advanced, subject-matter fields and have little interest (or expertise) in teaching general courses to lower-division students. In brief, on many college campuses there is neither the student demand nor the faculty supply implied by most recommendations for reclaiming the humanities and/or re-establishing core curricula. To insist that senior (and tenured) faculty teach introductory (or general) courses in their respective academic disciplines is to insist on further mediocrity in teaching (and learning) at the freshmen and sophomore level. The likely outcome will be a continued failure "to reach" students *and* to retain many good students for advanced, specialized programs of instruction in the junior and senior years.

Many observers will agree that the active involvement and participation of faculty must precede realistic hopes for substantive and enduring improvements in undergraduate education. Faculty incentives, rewards, and personal recognition must be tied to improved classroom performance and to the re-organization of undergraduate programs. To the

extent that teaching faculty are promoted and tenured (primarily) for activities such as publishing and consulting, they will be less concerned with the effectiveness of their classroom instruction. Occasionally faculty members are rewarded well for planning, organizing, and developing innovative courses that address student interests. More often than not, they are frustrated by an absence of interest on the part of deans and department heads and by the gauntlet of faculty committees they must run to gain course approval.

A serious detriment to the improvement of undergraduate education is the organization of college curricula. The functions of undergraduate courses and programs have changed significantly since the 1950s, but the structure of degree programs is essentially the same. The undergraduate curriculum is still a "two-layer cake" in which general, survey, or introductory courses are taught to freshmen and sophomores while advanced, specialized, or technical courses are reserved for juniors and seniors. An increasing proportion of entering freshmen are required to take "non-degree-credit" coursework in English and mathematics, and the freshmen year continues to "weed out" the errors made by admission offices. And despite efforts to establish core curricular requirements in English, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences, more and more students must take "prerequisite" courses for their major fields of study. The obvious outcome of all this is the additional time (and expense) that is required to earn a bachelor's degree.

Given the structure of undergraduate degree programs and the continuous adjustments that must be made in program content and requirements, college and university faculty will resist any recommendation that adds a fifth year to the traditional four-year degree. Given the increasing costs of a college education and the unattractive job market that is evident in many fields, students and parents will resist any recommendation that adds to their financial investment. Thus, innovative ways of re-structuring undergraduate education give better promise of improvement than further

tinkering with course content and program requirements. The stimulus for such innovations necessarily will come from off-campus, but greater initiative must be taken by institutional leaders and active faculty participation must be evident before public hopes for reform can soar.

But most of all, the improvement of undergraduate education requires some kind of academically significant "carrot." Too many commission reports would apply the "stick" of embarrassment or shame without appreciating the extent to which academicians are inured to such criticisms. Many efforts to reform undergraduate education have come and gone. Another press conference at which another "national report" is released with cries of alarm will not catch the ear of faculty members who have "heard it all before."

Thus, the challenge to higher education is: (a) to strengthen course offerings in general education, (b) to concentrate more effectively on the development of basic academic competencies, (c) to give more instructional attention to the mastery of advanced learning skills, and (d) to counterbalance in more effective ways the inclinations of students and teaching faculty to specialize in intellectually and culturally narrow fields of advanced study. Colleges and universities can meet that challenge most effectively through inducements (to teaching faculty) to revise course content and requirements and to define more explicitly program standards and faculty expectations for baccalaureate degrees. Institutional leaders should seek ways in which outside pressures on college curricula can be relieved. Whatever the typical college curriculum might be, the hand of professional societies, federal regulations, state laws, and external pressure groups is much too heavy.

An additional challenge to colleges and universities is to take more seriously public expectations for the reform of undergraduate education. In particular, faculty members must recognize that public demands for assessment and accountability are insistent because faculty evaluations of student performance (e.g., course grades) are no longer informative.

Some critics have long believed that the examining and grading practices of college instructors are a cogent means whereby undergraduate education can be improved. The majority of faculty members receive no assistance, guidance, or instruction in developing course exams, assigning grades, and applying academic standards. In much the same manner they receive little assistance in communicating instructional objectives and expected outcomes to students, colleagues, or others. And yet, the evaluation of student performance is the most exclusive responsibility that college faculty exercise.

Teacher-made tests, midterms, and end-of-course examinations are undoubtedly the means by which *most* educational outcomes are assessed, measured, or evaluated. Tests and course exams thus have motivational properties that more college teachers should use more wisely. Knowledge of results, feedback, and/or reinforcement of learning are obviously related to the effective use of course exams and achievement tests—and should be the major purpose for testing at all levels of education. For such reasons, the NIE recommendations for assessment and feedback will bear frequent repetition.

To clarify the responsibilities of college faculty in defining, teaching, and testing basic skills, better communications between faculty and the general public would be most helpful. The same is true for other "grey areas" of faculty responsibility such as teaching ethical or moral conduct and/or personal values. Basic skills, values, and ethical concepts are the student outcomes for which public criticisms are often vehement—and for which college faculty members are most reluctant to accept responsibility. Given situations in which the likelihood of success is so low, many faculty members will be tempted to supply old solutions to new educational problems—e.g., by the addition of *ad hoc* (and perhaps specious) courses to crowded college curricula, and by tinkering with campus calendars.

ENSURING EFFECTIVE COOPERATION

The clearest message in many commission reports and policy studies is our national, regional, state, and local need for better cooperation between higher education and: (1) secondary education, (2) business, and (3) government. The major issues and problems with which institutions of higher education must cope are educational problems that begin in elementary and secondary education *and* societal problems that cannot be solved without the assistance of corporate business and state government. All cooperative efforts among schools, colleges, business corporations, and government agencies must be initiated under conditions of great uncertainty and without promise of quick returns on investments. Decisions and choices must be made at a time of rapid social, economic, technological, and cultural change—and in a context of conflicting public perceptions and expectations concerning the effectiveness of educational institutions.

To ensure effective cooperation in the 1990s, something more than bi-lateral agreements must be reached by educators, businessmen, and government officials. Long-term commitments must be made and sustained in an environment that is much more conducive to "hit-and-run" tactics. Common problems, issues, and concerns must be identified and defined in terms of practical realities *and* the public interest. And many public policy issues must be resolved in a nation where the common purposes of elementary, secondary, and higher education are intensely debated without ever being defined.

For example: the NIE Report recommends that federal and state agencies, private foundations, college and university research organizations, and researchers concerned with higher education should focus their funding strategies and research activities on the facilitation of greater student learning and development. Such policies should surely help; the objective is commendable and the expected outcomes are much to be desired. Unfortunately for policy and decision

makers, college instruction has never been research-based and student learning is not a criterion with which to evaluate schools, colleges, teaching, instruction, *or* funded projects. As the debate over national goals, standards, and examinations proves, there is no common ground on which the debaters stand and no consensus as to what students learn in school and college classrooms. As a result, the research and development expenditures necessary to make a verifiable impact on student learning would be astronomical. As much as any of us would like to see schools and colleges concentrate on student learning, we are unprepared to give a definition that will be accepted by all participants in the educational enterprise.

School and College Cooperation

During the 1980s the cascade of recommendations for cooperative efforts produced numerous alliances, partnerships, or other forms of collaboration between secondary schools and institutions of higher education. Many of these cooperative efforts were based on long standing relations between colleges and high schools that served common constituencies. Other forms of cooperation were expedient and/or the product of outside funding. In various ways the cooperative relations of high schools and colleges were indicative of a "third wave" of educational reform since World War II. The "reports of 1983" (see annotated bibliography) challenged the complacency of public school educators and advocated: (1) more explicit requirements for high school graduation, (2) more explicit college admission standards, and (3) better communication between schools and colleges about the ways in which they serve students. Such efforts were consistent with the College Board's (1983) definition of the basic academic competencies students needed for success in college and with the numerous other efforts to address a national decline in the basic skills of literacy. Significant progress thus has been made in the area of common goals, high school graduation requirements, and college

entrance requirements. Evidence is seen in the statewide adoption of recommended and/or required pre-college curricula for college attendance. The University System of Georgia and the State Board of Education, for example, adopted (for implementation in 1988) the College Board's statement on basic academic competencies and prescribed a course of high school study for students planning to enter public colleges within Georgia.

Other forms of collaboration between high schools and colleges were identified by the Carnegie Foundation (Maeroff, 1983). Models (or examples) of cooperation ranged from the acceleration of students through early admissions and advanced placement to various arrangements for tutoring and teaching assistance by enrolled college students. Effective cooperation between schools and colleges, according to Maeroff, is dependent upon: (1) agreement that schools and colleges have *common* problems, (2) overcoming the handicaps of "pecking orders" that were established in the past, (3) projects that are sharply focused, and (4) suitable recognition of those who participate in cooperative efforts.

Gaudiani and Burnett (1986) write about the benefits of alliances, as opposed to partnerships. They emphasize the mutual advantages to school teachers and college instructors as professional colleagues with common interests. School/college alliances should begin by identifying faculty who are interested in collaboration, and a steering committee with representatives from all levels should define major areas of concern, initial goals, and the geographic area which the alliance will serve. An important function of such alliances is to build incentives by which faculty and institutions can participate. In particular, faculty members deserve credit and/or recognition for their involvement in alliance activities.

The implementation of national goals, standards, and examinations will require extensive cooperation between schools and colleges. It is difficult to see how realistic national goals and standards for secondary schools can be set without the cooperation of colleges and universities. In much

the same manner, the cooperation of technical schools and proprietary institutions will be needed if the national dropout rate is to be significantly altered. The challenge to all school/college alliances or partnerships is to facilitate more effectively the transfer of secondary students to all postsecondary opportunities: public, private, technical, and proprietary.

The barriers to concerted and sustained cooperation, of course, are numerous. Not the least of these are the excessive bureaucratization that characterizes most state departments of education and the disruptive features of local politics. Another is the extreme sense of proprietorship that many school and college officials exhibit in many of their public relations. A fourth barrier is the inability of school and college teachers to speak a common language. Setting all such difficulties aside, the cooperative efforts of schools and colleges is unlikely to be sustained without extraordinary attention and leadership by presidents and superintendents, by deans and principals, and by dedicated teachers at all levels of education.

Business and Higher Education

Alliances and partnerships with business have been pushed even more aggressively than those advocated for schools and colleges. The resources and capabilities of universities and colleges are needed in human capital formation, research and development, technological innovation, technology management, and international competition. The cooperation of corporate business is needed in curriculum planning and development, technological adaptations and uses in college teaching, and technological innovations in other phases of institutional planning, management, assessment, and evaluation. Examples of university-business cooperation range *from* the establishment of technological research and development parks (adjacent to the campuses of major research universities) and visiting professorships for topflight scientists, engineers, and technicians *to* gifts of

desktop computers and other technological equipment for instructional uses.

In business and higher education relations there are many alliances or partnerships that work to the mutual benefits of universities and business corporations. The effectiveness of cooperation is quite evident in the well publicized fields of microelectronics, biotechnology, and telecommunications. David Powers and his co-authors (1988) paint an encouraging picture of the many opportunities that exist in research, training, and economic development. Although the "goals and values" of higher education and business differ significantly, the "differing needs of academe and industry" can be reconciled. Many university policies and priorities, however, do not have counterparts in industrial or business corporations and "conflicts of interests" are part of the risk that is involved when university resources and talents are used for "non-educational" purposes. For example, faculty rights to patents and "first publication" are unusually thorny issues in certain kinds of contract research.

Business-university partnerships are formed in the context of a global economy and international competition. The changing needs of the nation's workforce are influenced significantly by the expected benefits and opportunities of European economic unification in 1992 (Silva and Sjogren, 1990). At regional and state levels, institutions of higher education are expected to contribute in many substantial ways to economic growth and progress. In addition to its training and instructional capabilities, its resources and expertise in basic and applied research, and its constructive leadership the contemporary research/graduate university is expected to provide technical assistance and services in organizational innovation, small business development, community development, industrial revitalization, and the advancement of high-technology or knowledge-based industries. The most important contribution, however, will continue to be an educated workforce for technology-driven industry, business, and finance.

In its efforts to provide an educated workforce postsecondary and higher education receives many conflicting signals. Wherever business, industry, and government leaders convene, there is talk of "restructuring" the nation's school system. Educational practices and requirements are regarded as outmoded, and the effectiveness of public schooling is severely questioned. Colleges and universities are not excluded from such talk. The Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree is a favorite target of many critics and consultants who see MBA/corporate executives as resting on their academic laurels (and perquisites) throughout a decade of corporate raiding and leveraged buyouts. Many of the nation's business corporations report (in surveys) that they no longer recruit business school graduates. Yet, a three-year study of management education (Porter and McKibbin, 1988) found great improvement in management programs since the 1950s. Where there is criticism of business graduates, it is for "lack of vision" and for insufficient emphasis on managing people, communication, environmental issues, ethics, and international competition.

From other sources there are indications that business school graduates may have oversupplied what was once regarded as an insatiable market for supervisory and managerial personnel. If Boyett and Conn (1991) are correct, the "downsizing" of American corporations means the reduction of middle management and the relegation of management responsibilities to self-organizing workteams. In turn, the restructuring of the "American workplace" will mean more and more workteams who do their own planning, organizing, and managing (Hackman, et al., 1986). The forces shaping the American economy thus are: integration of the world economy, the shift from producing goods to services, innovations in advanced technology, renewed emphasis on productivity, and increasing competition in global markets (*Workforce 2000*, 1987). And the skills needed by American workers are again the learning skills and competencies that can be developed best in the nation's schools and colleges.

In brief, the changing nature of work, with its different work environments, imposes a national need for different worker skills and habits that are remarkably similar to those advocated by the College Board for high school graduates entering college. These essential skills enable learners to continue learning and to apply new knowledge in economically productive ways.

It is clearly evident that a higher priority must be assigned the development of technological competence and sophistication in college graduates entering the nation's workforce. Basic skills must go beyond traditional notions of literacy (e.g., reading and writing) to higher-level competencies in critical thinking (analysis, synthesis, interpretation, and evaluation). Special emphasis must be placed on the adaptive uses of computers and telecommunications in technical problem solving and decision making. All such efforts require better command of fundamental concepts and principles in science, mathematics, and technology. In particular, college graduates must be better informed, more knowledgeable, and more appreciative of multi-national business, international relations, and competition within a technology-driven global economy.

State Government

Relations with higher education shifted significantly in the 1980s as the federal government altered public policies, funding priorities, and the nature of its leadership. The Education Commission of the States (ECS), as a counterbalance to federal dominance, has been quite direct in its advocacy of state responsibilities for higher education. The ECS Task Force on Economic Education for Growth (1983) gave strong emphasis to: (1) state-level planning for the improvement of public schools, (2) broader and more effective partnerships with business, (3) quality assurances in education by improvements in teacher selection and training, and by better methods of certifying school teachers and administrators, and (4) better service to students now underserved by public schools.

In its report on undergraduate education, ECS was straightforward about transforming the state's role. The report advocated comprehensive state strategies for: (1) remediation of educational deficiencies, (2) multiple methods of early assessment, and (3) the evaluation of statewide policies. In a third report, the president of ECS (Newman, 1987) discusses in good detail the nation's increasing concern about government-university relations and the role of the state in providing leadership without interfering politically, bureaucratically, or ideologically in educational policies and practices. State government is properly concerned about needless duplication and conflict between state universities, the excessive costs of many professional programs, and the unceasing efforts of institutions to upscale their missions. State intervention must be sensitive, however, to institutional autonomy and flexibility—and to the relationship of autonomy to quality. From a state-level perspective, state universities have failed to: (a) differentiate their respective missions, (b) avoid over-extension of their programs and services, and (c) develop "differential measures of institutional prestige." From the perspective of institutional leaders, governing boards of state institutions have not always served well as buffer agencies (to prevent political interference) and the separate states have not resolved many conflicts that undermine public confidence in their state universities.

In education and government relations there are encouraging forms of cooperation in the development of technical education, in the sponsorship of centers for advanced technology development, and in the provision of executive and management development programs by leading universities for business corporations and governmental agencies. Nonetheless, a need for greater cooperation is evident in the continued development of postsecondary and higher education programs and services. The state's economic growth and the productivity of its workforce is closely tied to the education (knowledge, competence, and understanding) of its citizens and residents. The education, training, and

development of the state's leadership is directly related to the quality of the educational opportunities that are available within the state and within commuting distance. All states should make better use of their public universities and community colleges for the preparation of civic leaders and government employees. The university's resources, talents, and expertise should be more accessible to (and more effectively used by) state leaders and public employees. To compete successfully in international markets, other perspectives and viewpoints will be needed by civic and business leaders. International, national, statewide, and community perspectives and experience should be accessible at state universities through their inservice and continuing education programs. Thus, all states should emphasize more strongly the value of inservice and continuing professional education and development (Fincher, 1989).

In brief, university-government relations, throughout the 1980s, were on an uneven course. As the federal government withdrew financial support and adopted an unnecessarily adversarial role, state governments were challenged to take up the slack. And as the national economy gave evidence of uncertain growth, state-level attention turned to areas and subregions of slow growth.

Implications for Reform

Cooperative relations between schools and colleges, corporate business and higher education, government and state universities are complex and ambiguous. No one should doubt the need for better working relations, the necessity of defining common interests, and the desirability of giving working relations a specific focus that serves the mutual purposes of public education, state government, and private enterprise.

All cooperative efforts should be explicit about the benefits that will accrue to the cooperating parties. They should also be explicit about the areas and levels within which cooperation is needed and about the boundaries that

should be respected. Basic skills of literacy, in particular, must be taught from the beginning and they must be reinforced at all levels of elementary, secondary, and higher education. Basic academic competencies, however, should receive concerted attention in the last three years of high school and be reinforced in more appealing ways so as to ensure their transfer to higher-level subject matter. Reading, writing, and mathematics are not the general skills that were once acquired by the end of the fourth grade. They are intellectual competencies that are increasingly specialized as students ascend academic ladders and follow their individual interests and preferences. The ability to read cookbooks, workshop manuals, or the daily newspaper is a function of reading interest and experience, as well as skills taught in classrooms. This is but one reason why the basic skills of literacy are not often improved by the simple addition of a reading course to high school or college curricula. It is also the source of slogans such as "writing across the curriculum." The challenge, of course, is to move beyond slogans to concerted, long-term programs of development and improvement.

The education of a more capable, better informed workforce thus is a challenge that all schools, colleges, government agencies, and business corporations should join. Effective cooperation in meeting that challenge requires better information and more extensive knowledge about the technical skills, competencies, and abilities that future workforces will need. Throughout the 1980s there were conflicting signals about: (a) the increasing proportion of occupations that would require a college education, and (b) the decreasing proportion of jobs that would require more than minimal skills. The conflicting signals about the nation's future need for managerial and supervisory personnel are particularly troublesome. As desktop computers play an increasing role in organizational communications, efforts have been made to reduce payrolls and increase productivity by the reduction of middle management positions that are primarily channels of communication.

Thus, an urgent feature of the challenge is to specify in educational and employment terms the abilities and competencies that school and college graduates need to enter the workforce. All can agree that reading, writing, and calculating are desirable skills but there the agreement ends. Very few job descriptions are explicit about how well employees must read, write, and calculate to perform successfully in particular occupations.

The continued development of learning skills and habits could be a solution to the problem for many employers and educators. In education there has been no better proof of success than the effective continuance of one's education at a higher level. In the world of work the "potential for continued growth," "the ability to grow and develop," "to assume higher levels of responsibility," "to learn from observation and experience" would appear to be a significant characteristic in many occupations. Unfortunately for the cooperative efforts of business and higher education, these are the job qualifications that are often resisted by federal and state government in the employment of their own workers, in their regulation of business and industry (e.g., labor and civil rights legislation), and in court rulings concerning the rights of workers. Standardized tests, in particular, have been criticized by their adversaries because: (a) they presumably cannot measure or assess such worthy qualifications, and (b) the use of all such tests is unfair because the standards imposed are irrelevant for many applicants who would meet all other job qualifications.

For such reasons, the university's cooperative efforts with business and with government can be ensured only if all partners recognize that some university programs and services are: (a) highly appropriate and quite likely to be effective (e.g., human resource development), (b) some programs are appropriate but not likely to be effective (e.g., training in basic skills), (c) some programs are not appropriate but can be effective (e.g., certain kinds of contract training), and (d) some programs and services might be neither effective nor appropriate (e.g., capital development).

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The findings and recommendations of the commission reports, as discussed in this monograph, are addressed to public leaders and policy makers in secondary and higher education, in state government, and in corporate business. The intent of all commission reports is to bring about constructive changes in public and institutional policy that will foster national, regional, and state objectives in an era of intense international competition. By and large, the commission reports have been well publicized, widely distributed, and frequently discussed within academic and educational circles. Nonetheless, the extent to which the reports reach and influence opinion leaders in business, industry, and government is indefinite, and the extent to which the reports reach policy and decision makers in higher education is uncertain.

Further consideration of all major reports, their findings, and their recommendations would be in the public's best interest. Policy recommendations should be reviewed by national, regional, and state leaders who are well prepared to advise and counsel those who are responsible for implementation. Recommendations addressing institutional and program policies should be reconsidered in light of the changing conditions in secondary education (since 1983) and higher education (since 1986). Such efforts, as indicated earlier in this monograph, require an appreciable amount of sifting and sorting. Given the topical organization of many recommendations (and their scatter-gun aims), a rationale for assigning priorities is the first order of business.

An objective of this monograph is to suggest ways in which priorities can be assigned by public leaders and policy makers—and by college and university faculties. As discussed here, the major challenges issued in the various reports are: (1) assessing educational outcomes, (2) improving undergraduate education, and (3) ensuring effective cooperation. A value premise of the monograph can be stated to

the effect that all three challenges are inherent in public demands and expectations that have been changing over the past three decades. In higher education there has been at least three "eras of commission reports" since the 1960s. The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education and its successor, the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies, published well over 130 volumes of reports during the 1960s and 1970s. Other national foundations, associations, and organizations followed their lead. All of these reports, in one way or another, have addressed a national need for reform in education.

Two cogent differences between earlier reports and those of the 1980s are *thrust* and *timing*. There are many reasons to believe that the decade of the 1990s brings a greater seriousness of purpose to the improvement of undergraduate education. In addition to the widespread concern with assessment, there is an increasing awareness of learning skills and competencies in education, industry, business, and government. Within faculty ranks there is an encouraging attentiveness to college teaching. Not the least of positive, constructive forces in the cooperative efforts of education, business, and government is the nation's awareness of international competition. To compete more successfully in a global economy, the cooperation of schools, colleges, government agencies, and business corporations is *indeed* essential.

Despite difficulties, better evidence is available (in 1991) concerning the leadership, resources, and capabilities that are essential to constructive changes in institutional programs, services, and activities. Many institutions will need forms of outside assistance that are *not* discussed in many of the commission reports, but other institutions are on solid footing in their efforts to address the learning needs and interests of undergraduate students *and* the teaching methods of college faculty.

In the midst of optimism concerning partnerships between schools and colleges, between universities and business corporations, and between universities and state governments a healthy skepticism is advisable. Not only must

the benefits of such partnerships be mutual, the anticipated outcomes of cooperation must be compatible with the different missions and goals of the cooperating organizations and institutions. Productivity, efficiency, and profitability serve the purposes and values of corporate business quite well; they are not, however, dominant purposes in higher education. Colleges and universities therefore are challenged to define more explicitly their purposes and to demonstrate institutional effectiveness in achieving their stated missions. In achieving institutional effectiveness *all* colleges and universities are responsible to the general public, as well as their own diverse constituencies, sponsors, donors, and clients.

All of the above suggest a fourth consideration in all cooperative efforts of education, business, and government. In the long run of assessing educational outcomes, improving undergraduate education, and ensuring effective cooperation, it will not suffice merely to gain mutual benefits and advantages in a competitive world. The public interest is a factor in all such efforts and must be protected. In recent years access and equity issues have been highly prominent in public demands and expectations. Minority access, participation, involvement, and equity will continue to be in the public interest for the foreseeable future. The traditional values and beliefs of the *university*, as a relatively independent and autonomous sociocultural institution, also serve the public's best interest and must be respected in cooperative programs and services. In many aspects of economic growth, international cooperation, technological innovation, and cultural advancement the nation's public universities and community colleges are the nation's major renewable resource.

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APPENDIX A

On the Reform of American High Schools (An Annotated Bibliography)

Action for Excellence: A Comprehensive Plan to Improve Our Nation's Schools. Education Commission of the States (1983).

Prepared by the ECS Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, chaired by James G. Hunt, Jr., governor of North Carolina. Other members of the task force were the governors of Tennessee, Florida, New Jersey, Colorado, Utah, Oklahoma, Indiana, Minnesota, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Mississippi, as well as state legislators, business leaders, and educators. To improve American public elementary and secondary schools, eight "Action Recommendations" are offered: (1) develop state plans for improving public education from kindergarten thru grade 12; (2) create broader and more effective partnerships; (3) marshal the resources which are essential for improving public schools; (4) express a new and higher regard for teachers; (5) make academic experiences more productive; (6) provide quality assurance in education; (7) improve leadership and management in the school; and (8) serve better the students who are now underserved. The report concludes with a list of "basic skills and competencies for productive employment." The acquisition of these skills by U.S. students are linked to America's global competitiveness.

Educating Americans for the 21st Century: A Plan of Action for Improving Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education. A Report to the American People and the National Science Board. National Science Foundation (1983).

Produced by the National Science Board's Commission on Precollege Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology, this report offers a plan to improve elementary and secondary schools so that the achievement of American

students will be "the best in the world by 1995." Co-chaired by William T. Coleman, Jr. and Cecily Selby, the commission included educators and business leaders. The report calls for all of the nation's students to achieve a level of mathematics, science, and technology education that is the finest in the world—without sacrificing personal choice, equity and opportunity. It places emphasis on retraining, obtaining and retaining high quality teachers. Also stressed is the need for increased math, science and technology requirements in high school and for more rigorous standards for promotion and graduation, as well as higher entrance requirements in colleges and universities.

High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America. Harper and Row/Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1983).

In this report Ernest L. Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, focuses on high school curricula and teaching. The report calls for high schools to establish clearly stated goals that would be widely shared. Schools should focus on the mastery of language, a core of common learning, preparation for work and further education, and on community and civic service. Boyer advocates a single track for all students in the first two years and attention to the special obligation to help all students become skilled in the written and oral use of English. Also advocated are measures to attract top students into teaching and to improve instruction.

Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School. Houghton Mifflin for the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Independent Schools (1984).

Theodore R. Sizer's report from a study of high schools was co-sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Independent Schools. The report describes a composite teacher as having stayed with his profession by giving up his expectations for change in students or schools. Finding students to be passive and docile, but lacking in reasoning skills, Sizer challenges schools to stimulate questioning by students. Emphasizing use of the human mind, Sizer advocates that students be required to demonstrate mastery of their work. Central to Sizer's thesis is a call for simplified, flexible structure focused on inquiry and expression, mathematics and science, literature and the arts, and philosophy and history. Little value is seen for most students in physical, vocational, and foreign language education.

Making the Grade. Report of the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Policy. Background Paper by Paul E. Peterson (1983).

This work includes the report of the Task Force on Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Policy and a background paper written by Paul E. Peterson. Declaring that the nation faces potential disaster because of the deterioration of public schools, the report calls for a "national commitment to excellence." It declares that reform and revitalization of elementary and secondary education must be funded and guided by the federal government, which must provide help to schools to meet goals of both equity and excellence. It finds that governmental demands in the past had contributed to the problems schools face. Supporting this view of the federal role, Peterson calls for federal support of parental choice, competency-based education, and block grants. The report favors a common core within all public schools *and* linked with continued diversity and local control.

Meeting the Need for Quality: Action in the South. Progress Report to the Southern Regional Education Board by its Task Force on Higher Education and the Schools (June 1983).

This report on the status of education in the South was prepared by SREB's Task Force on Higher Education and the Schools, chaired by S. John Davis, Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction. Other members of the task force are representatives from education and government in 14 southern states. The report notes improvements in raising high school requirements and college admission standards, in tightening teacher selection standards, and in cooperation between higher education and the schools. It also indicates areas needing further action. These "priorities for further action" include steps for improving the quality of teachers, choosing principals who are leaders, strengthening mathematics and science education in southern schools, and in preparing students for work. The report notes the need to ensure an adequate supply of black teachers, and the need to reward and foster excellence in teaching.

A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform. A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (April 1983).

The National Commission on Excellence in Education was appointed in 1981 by Secretary of Education T.H. Bell and chaired by David Gardner, president of the University of Utah and president-elect of the University of California. Declaring that "our nation is at risk," the report states that "if an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war." The commission calls for improvements in the content of the high school curriculum and the standards of high schools and colleges, increases in time spent in school in order to master basic skills, and better support and higher standards

for teachers. The report emphasizes a national need for increased leadership and fiscal support, declaring that the Federal Government has the primary responsibility to identify the national interest in education. Finally, the report calls for better efforts from students and parents. *This* report has been quite influential in stimulating a national concern with the quality of public schooling.

The Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto. By Mortimer J. Adler on Behalf of the Members of the Paideia Group. Macmillan Publishing Co. (1982).

Mortimer J. Adler, speaking for the Paideia Group, proposes reforms in elementary and secondary education to "be achieved at the community level without resorting to a monolithic, national educational system." Addressing his suggestions to school boards and administrators, Adler calls for the elimination of nonessentials, electives, and vocational training from the curriculum. He advocates greater attention to preschool and remedial and foreign language learning and emphasizes that all children can learn. An interesting feature of his manifesto proposes that teaching and learning be organized around "Three Columns": acquiring knowledge, developing thinking and learning skills, and enlarging understanding of ideas and values. Improved teacher education and administrative leadership are identified as keys to reform. Adler provides the most interesting of all *reports—and* the most unlikely to be implemented!

American Education: Making It Work. By William J. Bennett. A Report to the President and the American People. U.S. Department of Education (1988).

This report by William J. Bennett examines American education since the publication of *A Nation at Risk.* Although the report points to some gains in student achievement and school performance since 1982, it finds the gains to be slight, stating that as a result of unacceptably low

performance, "by almost any standard we are not where we need to be." While students have grasped basic skills, they have not been able to build on these skills. Bennett outlines "five key principles that should guide continued reform of American education." First, the content of the high school curriculum must be strengthened, eliminating trivial, shallow courses. Although cultural and ethnic diversity must be accommodated, all students, including vocational students, must receive a similar core body of knowledge and ideas.

Second, parents and educators must join in ensuring that all students, from all ethnic backgrounds, are challenged by a demanding curriculum. To do this, a new ethos of achievement must be established, teaching basic moral principles, establishing order and discipline and encouraging solid work habits. Next, it must be recognized that the most important part of this "ethos" is the staff. Teacher education needs continued improvement, and three basic principles need to be acted upon: the movement to open teaching to talented individuals from many backgrounds, the demand that teachers demonstrate competence, and pay based on performance. Similarly, principals need better training, more authority, and need to be recruited from a wider range of backgrounds.

Finally, educators need to be held responsible for the results of their work. Schools and educators need to be accountable for their success or failure in spending money wisely, in providing choice to parents and students, in monitoring the productivity of the staff, and in rewarding success. Bennett concludes by declaring that "American education *can* be made to work better ... and this work can be done soon" if Americans move to remove the obstacles that block reform.*(CG)*

APPENDIX B

Sponsors of Major Commission Reports

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (AASCU)

... a voluntary association that includes more than 400 public higher education institutions, ranging from small four-year colleges to large comprehensive universities. Membership encompasses 30 state higher education systems as well as colleges and universities throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands. Approximately 20 percent of all college students and nearly one-third of all undergraduates in America attend AASCU institutions. The association was begun in 1961 and opened its Washington office in 1962. Allan Ostar has been president of AASCU since it was organized. AASCU works closely with other associations, especially the American Council on Education (ACE), and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC). The association conducts workshops and seminars on a wide range of higher education topics, produces publications in these areas, supports international education, analyzes and interprets federal and state policies, and attempts to help member institutions establish links with business and federal, state, and local governments.

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES (AAC)

... is a voluntary association of colleges, organized in 1915, that focused for many years on the concerns of private higher education. Over the years, however, the association concentrated more specifically on undergraduate liberal arts education, and its membership has expanded to include more than 600 public two-year and four-year colleges and universities with strong liberal arts missions. The association supports the liberal arts through workshops, publications and grants and seeks to both improve teaching and to

increase public understanding of the value of liberal education. Paula P. Brownlee is president; Carol G. Schneider is executive vice president.

CARNEGIE FOUNDATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING (CFAT)

... a private foundation endowed by Andrew Carnegie in 1905 and chartered by Congress in 1906. Although the foundation was originally intended to provide retirement funds for college faculty, that function was turned over to the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association in 1918. Since then, the foundation has served as an independent policy center, conducting and supporting research and policy studies in education. Throughout its history, the foundation has made generous, significant, and substantive contributions to the development of higher education. It funded the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, which from 1967 to 1973 produced a valuable series of reports on higher education and the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, both chaired by Clark Kerr. The foundation is headquartered in Princeton, and its president is Ernest L. Boyer.

EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES (ECS)

... a nonprofit commission created in 1966 by interstate compact to aid in the cooperation between leaders in education and government. Headquartered in Denver, the commission includes 48 states, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Each state appoints seven members, usually including the governor, two state legislators, and four other members. Primarily an advisory organization, ECS is funded by foundation grants, fees from member states, and grants from the federal government. ECS also helps draft state legislation affecting higher education and aids its members in communicating with the federal government and with each other. The commission also sponsors forums, publishes research and policy analysis, and recommends changes in policy. Frank Newman is president.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES (NEH)

... part of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities, a federal agency created by Congress in 1965. The other parts of the foundation are the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities. The advisory council for each branch sets policy independently of the other branches. The NEH supports activities that promote the humanities, making grants to institutions, groups, or individuals. The endowment supports both research and the development of experimental projects to better support and integrate the humanities in many areas of American society, including schools, museums and historical societies. The endowment is financed by gifts from private donors and matching funds from Congress. The chair of the NEH, Lynne V. Cheney, is also chair of the National Council on the Humanities and is required to seek the advice of the council before funding grants.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION (NIE)

... an agency of the U.S. Department of Education, created by Congress in 1972. Initially the focus of the institute was on funding grants for long-term programs of research and development. Its stated mission was to support equality of educational opportunity and to improve the practice of education. Grants are made to study organization and policy, teaching and learning, and/or improvement of educational practices. Under the Reagan administration, the National Institute of Education was replaced by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). As successor to the institute, OERI continues to fund five-year projects related to the improvement of education and to release periodic reports dealing with assessment. Some reports have been instrumental in furthering public awareness of outcomes assessment, but other reports reflect the "adversarial" posturing of the Department of Education under William Bennett.

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